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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Statement by the President

The President: At this first meeting of the General Assembly in 2007, I would like to wish all members a very happy new year. I hope that we can begin this year by working even more closely together in a spirit of cooperation, mutual trust and collective responsibility.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/61/709)

The President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/61/709, which contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly in which he informs the Assembly that 16 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/61/709?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

Culture of peace

Draft resolution (A/61/L.53)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on agenda item 44 at its 47th and 48th plenary meetings on 3 November 2006. Members will also recall that the Assembly previously adopted two resolutions — resolutions 61/45 and 61/221 — on 4 and 20 December 2006, respectively.

The Assembly now has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/61/L.53.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.53.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): I am pleased to announce that, since the original submission of the draft resolution, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Grenada, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea, Saint

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Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Togo have also joined as sponsors.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of 103 sponsors. As we prepare for Monday's observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, it is crucial that the General Assembly declare unambiguously and forcefully its condemnation, without any reservation, of any denial of the Holocaust. The draft resolution we are introducing builds on the strong foundation of resolution 60/7 of 2005 in making clear that all people and all States have a vital stake in a world free of genocide.

The terrible events of the Holocaust are deeply disturbing and will always remain so. It was one of the most tragic moral catastrophes in the history of humankind. We remember it — indeed, we must remember it — to ensure that such events are never repeated. Those who would deny the Holocaust — and, sadly, there are some who do — reveal not only ignorance but their moral failure as well.

Finally, the draft resolution urges all Member States unreservedly to reject any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to that end. By so doing, the Assembly places its moral authority and its political will squarely behind the very first words of our Charter, "to save succeeding generations".

The United Nations was founded in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and of the Holocaust. It is particularly fitting to remember this legacy.

On behalf of the sponsors, I offer draft resolution A/61/L.53 for adoption. We hope that all Member States will join in consensus so that the United Nations may speak as one on this vital issue.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/61/L.53. Before giving the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gharibi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to place on the record my delegation's deep concern over, and rejection of, the attempts made by certain members to misuse the General Assembly's procedure to raise an issue that has never been on the agenda of its sixty-first session and that has no relevance to the agenda item under which the draft resolution at hand has been submitted.

There is every reason to believe that today's attempt is both procedurally and substantively flawed. Indeed, the intention behind this move can by no means be regarded as a genuine one. The main sponsor's aim in presenting this draft resolution to the Assembly lies in its mischievous intention to pursue its narrow political interests through all means, including the misuse of this body.

If the thrust of the draft resolution is to condemn the crime of genocide, the Assembly, through a great number of resolutions, has already addressed that grave concern. Like many other countries, we have condemned genocide against any race or ethnic or religious group, as a crime against humanity. We reiterate that unambiguous position in this meeting today. In our view, there is no justification for genocide of any kind. Nor can there be any justification for the attempts made by some, particularly by the Israeli regime, to exploit past crimes as a pretext to commit new genocides and crimes. Moreover, many abhorrent cases of genocide that have regrettably occurred throughout history necessitate a thorough and comprehensive examination by the international community in order to prevent the recurrence of such crimes in the future.

Imposing a restrictive approach on such an examination will certainly not serve this purpose. Only by studying objectively what happened in the past can we ensure that such crimes will never be repeated. Undoubtedly, addressing historical events of horrific enormity with a view to avoiding their recurrence requires a commensurate degree of research, scrutiny and rigour. The seriousness and sincerity of that endeavour will indeed be undermined by rendering political judgements on such events and closing the door to any inquiry on their characteristics, scope and extent.

The basic principles of democracy, including the right to freedom of expression and belief, should pave the way for exploring different aspects of historical events without any arbitrary restrictions. Moreover, genocide and the immense suffering associated with

that horrific crime should not be manipulated for political purposes.

Regrettably, the Israeli regime has routinely attempted to exploit the sufferings of the Jewish people in the past as a cover for the crimes it has perpetrated over the past six decades against Palestinians in the occupied territories, including massacre, targeted assassination, ethnic cleansing and State terrorism. The international community should take strong action against the atrocious crimes of that regime and not allow it to manipulate humanitarian sentiments to pursue its illegitimate goals.

We are of the view that the main aims behind submitting this draft resolution are anything but a true concern for genocide or the suffering it brings about. Had that been the case, the main sponsors of the draft resolution would necessarily have referred to other cases of genocide perpetrated in various parts of the world in the past and at present, especially the crimes perpetrated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Palestine, Rwanda and the Balkans, all of which have inflicted enormous suffering and pain on mankind.

In view of the aforementioned, we fully dissociate ourselves from this entire hypocritical political exercise.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution. The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/61/L.53, entitled "Holocaust denial". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution A/61/L.53?

Draft resolution A/61/L.53 was adopted (resolution 61/255).

The President: Before giving the floor to delegations wishing to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): The delegation of Egypt joined the consensus on this resolution, stressing once again our strong belief that the Holocaust deserves to be remembered as one of the dark points in the history of humanity. We thank the sponsors, particularly those from among the European countries, for keeping this memory alive and for working towards correcting those mistakes.

The adoption of this resolution today, under agenda item 44, "Culture of peace", can only serve as another sobering reminder that the recurrence of such heinous crimes of genocide can be prevented only through intensifying the efforts of the international community to enhance and vitalize the cultures of peace, tolerance, coexistence, recognition and prevention of the suffering of others, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or beliefs.

The United Nations has a particular responsibility in that regard: to enhance the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions and to do whatever it takes to prevent the recurrence of such crimes in any part of the world, basing itself on equality of suffering and on the rule of law.

The painful memories of the Holocaust and the wrath it brought into the world should also serve as a poignant reminder of the necessity of combating racism, intolerance and xenophobia in all their forms. The history of the Holocaust should serve as a lesson: that appeasing intolerant ideologies and policies will cost humanity dearly. The international community should therefore not remain complacent in combating the increasing tide of Islamophobia in many parts of the world.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): My delegation joined the consensus on the adoption of this resolution for the following reasons. The Holocaust is undoubtedly one of the most terrible crimes against humanity ever committed. It reminds us of the dangers inherent in all forms of prejudice and discrimination. For more than 50 years, the world has struggled with that reality and its implications for the relations between and among peoples. It is one of the reasons for the popular political sentiment that swept the world in the post-war period: "Never again!" There can be no forgetting its lessons.

Having said that, I wish to stress that the Holocaust is hardly the only human tragedy to offer us those or similar lessons. Modern history is full of similar tragedies, being replete with human conflicts in which man's inhumanity to man is amply demonstrated and in which countless people are eliminated, sometimes in the most horrendous ways.

My delegation is of the view that the highest tribute we can pay to the victims of the Holocaust and other horrendous acts, such as ethnic cleansing and other historic mass murders, is to acknowledge those

horrors by reaffirming our resolve to work collectively to prevent such crimes against humanity from ever happening again and to stop them in their tracks whenever and wherever they threaten to erupt.

However, in acting upon the resolution, which condemns without any reservation any denial of the Holocaust, we cannot help but be reminded of the question of a standard of morality in the exercise of the freedom of expression, which is related to other issues but continues to pose similar challenges to our common humanity. Among those challenges is the controversy over the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, which has created tensions and divisions among peoples in many parts of the world.

We must accept that it is imperative to develop societies free from hatred and bigotry — societies that accept pluralism and nurture peace and respect for diverse cultural and religious values. It is our strong view that freedom of expression should be observed within that parameter. Open and frank dialogue is the best avenue for promoting that value and mutual understanding of and respect for differences, including in terms of cultural and religious values.

Mr. Palavicini-Guédez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela joined the consensus on the adoption of resolution 61/255, in keeping with our constitution and with historical Bolivarian principles. Likewise, we supported resolution 60/7 and its explanatory memorandum (A/60/194, annex I), which stated, in its paragraph 2, that the Holocaust was "a systematic and barbarous attempt to annihilate an entire people, in a manner and magnitude that have no parallel in human history".

Under that definition, millions of human beings were the victims of the Holocaust during the Second World War. That is also why we had to support this resolution. The deaths at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a Holocaust as well, which is why we must remember them.

Moreover, that definition should cause us to reflect on the holocaust perpetrated, little by little, against the Palestinian people. The General Assembly has repeatedly acknowledged the abuses and excesses that, in the name of self-defence, have made the victims of the Holocaust the perpetrators of a new holocaust against the Palestinians. We must also remember the slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun and Gaza on 16 November 2006, which shocked the conscience of the General Assembly and of the Human Rights Council. Those facts are part of a holocaust in stages.

Furthermore, the horrors of the past should be the best reason to demand greater respect for international law, international humanitarian law and human rights. Because of the invasion of Iraq, carried out in the name of democracy by the United States of America outside the framework of the Organization, hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis are also victims of a holocaust, because they have been systematically attacked and disrespected.

Our delegation reiterates its position that the education programmes proposed in resolution 60/7 and in the resolution that we have adopted today should have a broad orientation requiring a sound balance so that holocausts will cease and the United Nations will develop a comprehensive awareness of prevention and of the crime against humanity that is genocide.

All of us, without any distinction as to race, religion or political ideology, must comply with and ensure respect for the norms of international law defending the right to life, thus demanding respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

The General Assembly has just adopted draft resolution A/61/L.53, on Holocaust denial. By this action today, the Assembly reaffirms its condemnation of the Holocaust as a crime against humanity. This is a strong reminder to all that the international community is united in opposing all crimes against humanity.

For the dignity of all humanity, we must strengthen our resolve to prevent such atrocities, whenever and wherever they might occur. We can learn from the words of Edmund Burke, who said: "All that is needed for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing".

I now give the floor to delegations wishing to make statements on this item.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): Thank you, Madam President, for your words just now.

My delegation wishes to thank, first and foremost, all the sponsors of this resolution on Holocaust denial, as well as all the members in this

Hall who supported the resolution and what it stands for.

The adoption by consensus of resolution 60/7, on Holocaust remembrance, more than a year ago was a historic milestone for the General Assembly — indeed, for the United Nations — and an important step in bolstering the founding principles of this world body.

But even more, the resolution on Holocaust remembrance reflected the understanding of this Assembly that the lessons of the Holocaust are universal and that speaking out and educating about the Nazis' brutal and systematic murder of the Jewish people must focus world attention on the horror of genocide and compel all nations and people of good will to recommit their efforts to preventing such atrocities.

Regrettably, as we have seen since then, those lessons are being rejected and flouted in certain parts of the world. While the nations of the world gather here today to voice in unison their collective commitment to condemning Holocaust denial, without reservation and in any and all forms, a member of this Assembly continues to deny that eternal truth. While the nations of the world gather here to affirm the historicity of the Holocaust with the intent of never again allowing genocide, a member of this Assembly is acquiring the capabilities to carry out its own. The President of Iran is in fact saying: "There really was no Holocaust, but just in case, we shall finish the job". His pathetic mouthpiece, who publicly disassociated his country from the international community just now, has amplified that call in the most cynical and hypocritical way. The resolution adopted unanimously by the international community today answers that horrible statement in the most emphatic way.

It is against that backdrop that the resolution on Holocaust denial was conceived. The international community carries the profound responsibility of ensuring that the Holocaust and its lessons are never forgotten. The Holocaust serves as a warning to all people of the profound dangers of hatred, bigotry and racism.

Joining this resolution is a reaffirmation that the Holocaust is not up for question or debate. The lessons of the Holocaust carry such universal weight that they cannot be carried solely by the Jewish people. That is precisely why the nations of the world supported the resolution on Holocaust remembrance last year and are supporting this one on Holocaust denial.

This coming Monday, knowing that the nations of the world will not sit idly by and condone Holocaust denial, we will observe the second annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. This day is an opportunity for all of us, for this Assembly, for all Member States, and for the people of the world to recommit ourselves to human rights and the prevention of genocide. Protecting the memory of the Holocaust is an act of ensuring the future of mankind.

Today's resolution reminds those who viciously deny the Holocaust that they cannot escape the truth of reality. Let the next 72 hours, between today's adoption of the resolution on Holocaust denial and Monday's observance of Holocaust remembrance day, be a time of reflection and commitment for all us to affirm our collective duty of remembering the Holocaust and to act now to prevent the next one.

Indeed, at this time, the words of Winston Churchill, proclaimed more than two years before the start of the Second World War on 12 November 1936, are more poignant than ever:

> "The era of procrastination, of half measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays, is coming to a close. In its place, we are entering a period of consequences."

Allow me on this solemn occasion to speak to the Holocaust survivors and families of the victims around the world, and especially in Israel, and let me say to them: "This is for you. I dedicate this historic resolution to you, giving you back your personal history which evil minds have tried to erase and rob you of. As I speak here now, the sun is setting over Israel, heralding in the holy day of the Sabbath. As you say your prayers today, you can feel that the whole world is praying with you, telling you that you are not alone. And it is from this Hall, on the eve of that holy day, that I say to each and every one of you: '*Shabbat Shalom*'".

Mr. Matussek (Germany): Before I speak on behalf of the European Union, let me first emphasize that I am aware that the unprecedented crime of the Holocaust was committed by Germans and in the name of Germany, and that from that stems our very special responsibility. In 1945, after the liberation of the camps

and the defeat of Germany, it would have been presumptuous for us to hope that a country that had turned Europe into a place of war and genocide would soon be accepted as a close partner within a European Union.

I have the honour to speak on this solemn occasion on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union, like the United Nations itself, was born out of the catastrophe of war and genocide. Our peoples at that time were moved by the firm resolve to never let that happen again.

The Holocaust took place in Europe, but its significance reaches beyond Europe. It was unprecedented within human history. Therefore, every year on 27 January, the General Assembly and many United Nations Member States commemorate the liberation of the Nazi death camps. They honour the memory of the victims of the Holocaust — millions of Jews in the first place, but also other groups like the Sinti and Roma people, persons with disabilities and persons who were persecuted because of their sexual orientation.

In 2005, the General Assembly created the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The decision was taken by consensus and is proof of the resolve expressed then by each United Nations Member State not to let the Holocaust fall into oblivion or be ignored. The commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust must be a defining part of our common heritage and a measure of each State's commitment to a world free of genocide. We must all understand the responsibility imposed on us by the victims of the Holocaust. Especially today, when ever fewer survivors can pass on their personal experience of the Holocaust, it is vital to find new ways of keeping alive the memory of those terrible crimes for future generations.

By commemorating the Holocaust, we reaffirm our responsibility to combat anti-Semitism, racism and any form of political, ethnic or religious intolerance. Anti-Semitism was the central historical context of the Holocaust. Racism, intolerance and hatred may again generate atrocities and genocidal crimes. It is the duty of every member of today's global community to prevent that, but the first and foremost prerequisite for taking up that duty is the readiness to face the truth. It is the resolve neither to evade the truth nor to distort historical facts. Such distortions are a shameful failure of the responsibility we all share to ensure a world free from such atrocities.

Therefore, in 2005, the European Union supported the resolution by which January 27 was designated as the annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It also fully endorses today's resolution condemning any attempt to deny the Holocaust and to distort the historical truth. Every Member of these United Nations should do likewise.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Second World War ended over 60 years ago, but the memory of the monstrous crimes of Nazism lives on. If we are to eliminate any possibility of a future recurrence, we simply have no right to forget the tragedy of the Holocaust. No one can remain indifferent to anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racial or religious intolerance.

Today, we see the Holocaust not only as a tragedy of the Jewish people, but also as a tragedy of humanity. That is no exaggeration, since the intent of the Nazis was to follow up the fate of the Jews with a similar fate for other peoples, the Slavs not last among them.

The adopted resolution calls on all United Nations Member States to condemn not only the very fact of denying the Holocaust as a historic event, but also all actions aiming at that goal. That calls on us to address the issue from a broader perspective, taking into account ongoing processes in some parts of the world. We cannot but include among such activities attempts to revise the history of the Second World War and the role and honoured accomplishments of those who combated Nazism and liberated Europe from it. Is not forgetting their heroism a way to whitewash the fascism that unleashed the Holocaust?

Any State devoted to the ideals of democracy and humanism should view as unacceptable any attempt to glorify the accomplices of fascism, be they former members of Waffen-SS units or other collaborators

who killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, prisoners of war and prisoners of death camps. Such attempts may even include declarations in some countries of the day of liberation from fascism as a day of mourning, plans to destroy monuments to those who fought Nazism, or building monuments to those who fought on the side of fascism. Those who advocate such a revision of the Second World War should be reminded that it is not by accident that the General Assembly designated 27 January as the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It was on that date in 1945 that the Red Army liberated Auschwitz, one of the largest death camps.

The memory of the heroism of the Soviet soldiers and of the many millions of victims in our country will never allow us to tolerate those who, guided by opportunistic political interests, try to distort the significance of the great victory over fascism. In our country, we honour as sacred — and always will — the memory of the victims of Nazism, including 6 million Jews, 3 million of whom were citizens of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. That is why Russia supports the adoption of this important document by the General Assembly and has joined as a co-sponsor.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): The United States strongly supports today's resolution, which condemns without reservation any denial of the Holocaust. This Assembly should be proud of adopting today's resolution by consensus. It is shameful that one country decided to reject that consensus.

Tomorrow will be the sixty-second anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a Nazi death camp where over 1 million people were murdered. To this day, Auschwitz serves as a powerful symbol of what can happen when tyranny and oppression go unchecked. As we mourn those who lost their lives, we must, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted, reassert our commitment to human rights, which was desecrated at Auschwitz and by genocides and atrocities since.

The United States introduced and sponsored this important resolution not as a rhetorical exercise, but because of the implications of Holocaust denial in the world today. Some experts on the topic have noted that every genocide is followed by denial. Despite the undeniable truth about the Holocaust, we are now witnessing so-called scholars, even world leaders, attempting to revise history, masking a more dangerous agenda.

The resolution is not about countering free speech or intellectual thought; it is about avoiding future disasters. One observer put it simply and powerfully when he stated that " the black hole of forgetting is the negative force that results in future genocides" .

A little over a month ago, people around the world marked International Human Rights Week and renewed the solemn pledge of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted in the wake of the atrocities of the Second World War.

We take note that this body adopted by consensus in 2005 a resolution unequivocally rejecting the denial of the Holocaust as an historical event. We call upon all Member States to follow through on that and today's resolution to include measures in their educational systems that underscore the importance of never denying the Holocaust. As Kofi Annan remarked to us at the end of his tenure,

> "some of the rhetoric used in connection with the issue implies a refusal to concede the very legitimacy of Israel's existence, let alone the validity of its security concerns... Today, Israelis are often confronted with words and actions that seem to confirm their fear that the goal of their adversaries is to extinguish their existence as a State and as a people" (*S/PV.5584, p.4*).

Indeed, the words and actions of some, in direct violation of the Charter, underscore why this resolution is so important. Just last month, the Iranian regime sponsored a conference questioning the historical fact of the atrocities of the Holocaust. Iranian President Ahmadinejad has also called for the State of Israel to be wiped off the map. That same regime is under Security Council sanctions right now to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons in direct violation of its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The confluence of those three forces cannot be viewed abstractly or in isolation from each other. They create a cauldron of conflict that cannot be ignored.

Some will cloak their hatred and hidden agenda by invoking the right to free speech and academic freedom. There is a categorical difference between free speech and speech which wilfully and maliciously ignores recognized historical facts in order to advance an ulterior agenda. Conferences such as those

sponsored by Iran are designed solely to polarize and to incite hatred. If successful, they can then use that hatred as a catalyst to justify genocide.

It is also specious to diminish the Holocaust by making false comparisons, such as we heard earlier this morning from some delegations. As Kofi Annan powerfully noted, "What was done to Jews and others by the Nazis remains an undeniable tragedy, unique in human history" (*S/PV.5584, p. 4*).

The United States stands firmly opposed to any attempts to deny the Holocaust and to calls by anyone for the destruction of Israel. This resolution reinforces that message, and we encourage all Member States to take concrete steps to make that message heard. To deny the events of the Holocaust is tantamount to the approval of genocide in all its forms. Today, we stand together, saying to the world that we will not allow that to happen.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica supports the statement made by the representative of Egypt.

We supported resolution 61/255 on behalf of the Costa Rican citizens who survived the Holocaust — whose arms still bear the numbers tattooed on them in the death camps of Europe — and in memory of the families who were massacred in the Holocaust, as well as on behalf of Costa Rican citizens of all religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations and non-totalitarian ideologies. We hope that with this resolution we are making a contribution to humankind's struggle to ensure that there will be no more holocausts.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.